

Fatherhood, Family and Work in Men's Lives : Negotiating New and Old Masculinities

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The main aim of this article is to understand how men living in couples with young children construct their roles and identities as fathers in the context of different types of family functioning. To explore this issue, our analytical framework examines the dynamics of fathering and of family functioning, thereby focusing on the interrelationships between men as fathers, partners and breadwinners. Drawing on data from a qualitative study carried out in 2005-2006 in Portugal, the article shows a diversity of fatherhood patterns. Joint and supportive fatherhood emerge within the framework of fusional dynamics, while disengaged fatherhood is connected to gender-differentiated autonomy. Four other patterns were found to be linked to the various forms of the modern "associative" family identified in this study. Equal fatherhood emerges in couples whose practices closely match the ideals of gender equality and individual autonomy, whereas appropriative, time-condensed and stay-at-home patterns of fatherhood are connected to different forms of "gender unequal" associative couples.

I. Introduction

Much of the recent discussion on men in families has focused upon fathers, sometimes forgetting, it would seem, that the identity "father" nearly always implies the identity "breadwinner" as well as that of "partner" in a couple relationship (Nock, 1998 ; Townsend, 2002 ; Castelain-Meunier, 2002). One reason for the limitation of discussion about men in families to questions of fatherhood has been a growing public concern about absent fathers in the context of divorce and separation. Another has been the emphasis on changing practices of men in the late twentieth century, linked to the idea that new masculinities, within families, are largely equated with new forms of fatherhood (Marsiglio, 1995 ; Dulac, 1997 ; Connell, 1995). Although a number of studies have explored the sexual divisions of household tasks and power within families, they have re-

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vealed less change than expected, with attitudes shifting more clearly than actual practices. In contrast, evidence suggesting that men actively wish to participate in parenting and are directly involved in child care has contributed to the development of a strong focus on the practices of fatherhood (Bjornberg/Kollind, 1996 ; Modak/Palazzo, 2002).

In this article we suggest a broader strategy of analysis regarding fathers in families. The social practices and norms of fatherhood are conceptualized within the framework of contemporary changes in family functioning. From the point of view of family sociology, this means looking at two issues that are crucial for understanding the modernization of families. The first is the decline of the male-breadwinner model in European societies, a trend which is associated both with changes in the gender cultural models underpinning family divisions of labour and with the behaviour of families in relation to the labour market. Of particular importance has been the increased labour force participation of women, especially of married women and those with young children, and the rise in dual-earner couples. As a result, family divisions of labour have become more diverse, with the “dual breadwinner/dual carer” pattern emerging alongside other practices, such as the traditional “male breadwinner/female home-carer” pattern and its modified version centred on male full-time/female part-time work. These changes are reflected in women’s and men’s experiences of the articulation between work and family life. Recent empirical research shows that working women in general experience more work/family stress than men, but that men, in particular married men with young children, also have high levels of stress (Wall, 2007).

The second issue is the pluralization of family interactions. Sociologists have underlined a fundamental trend towards intimate relationships emphasizing the quest for autonomy and individual self-fulfilment, the centrality of negotiation, and a weakening of external constraints (Giddens, 1992 ; Singly, 1996 ; Beck/Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). However, rather than a single model of family functioning, conjugal modernity is seen to be developing around a limited set of diverse forms of interactions (Kellerhals *et al.*, 2004). “Associative” couples are those who put more emphasis on gender equality, autonomy and individual self-fulfilment through marriage ; “companionship” couples focus on fusion rather than autonomy but, as in “associative” couples, gender differentiation is fairly low and contact with the outside world is important ; high levels of fusion also exist in “bastion” couples, but they are connected to more gender differentiation and a tendency to closure and mistrust in relation to the external world ; “parallel” couples are characterized by closure and strong differentiation of gender roles but they emphasize autonomous and strictly separate spheres of functioning rather than a cohesive organization of the couple. Diverse patterns of conjugal relationships are associated with the social status of spouses, with “bastion” and “parallel” interactions emerging as more frequent in couples of low social status, and

“associative” interactions in high social status couples (Aboim/Wall, 2002).

Our main concern is to understand how men living in couples with young children construct their roles and identities as fathers in the context of different types of family functioning. To explore this issue, our analytical framework looks at the dynamics of fatherhood and of family functioning, thereby focusing on the interrelationships between men as fathers, partners and breadwinners. Fatherhood will be examined through the parental practices of fathers (caring practices since the child’s birth, involvement in other activities), the type of father-child bond (emotionally close or more distant ; mediated by the mother or based on a more individualized relationship) and through men’s orientation to fatherhood (how men see themselves as fathers). Family functioning will focus first on men’s orientation to conjugal and family life (how men see their place in the family) and on the types of conjugal interactions. The latter will be captured by looking at the degree of fusion, which designates the extent to which individual resources such as time, money, ideas, or feelings are pooled by partners, and the degree of openness, which designates the extent to which contacts and exchanges take place between the couple and the outside world. Family functioning will also be examined through the gendered divisions of paid and unpaid labour and men’s work-family balance (strategies used to articulate work and family life, work/family tensions and stress). Taking into account the division of work as well as conjugal interactions is an essential element of our analytical approach to family functioning.

Analysis will draw on data from a qualitative study on “Family life from the Male Perspective” in Portuguese society (Wall, 2006). In-depth interviews were carried out with sixty men belonging to different social classes and three types of family households : married/cohabiting couples with children, lone fathers and blended families. In this paper we will use one segment of the sample which covers interviews with men living in first partnership couples with children (24 interviews¹).

II. Understanding change and diversity in fatherhood

The qualitative study shows a diversity of patterns of the ways in which men perceive and live out their lives as fathers in the context of different forms of family functioning. Analysis of men’s discourses gradually revealed differential dynamics of fatherhood which we classified into seven patterns.

¹ The men interviewed were between age 31 and 48, with children below age 18, and belonged to varied socio-professional and educational groups : 7 had 4 to 6 years of schooling, 5 had 9 years, 5 had secondary schooling and 7 had a university degree or higher.

Table 1. Family functioning and fatherhood patterns.

FAMILY FUNCTIONING	Companion-ship	Bastion	Parallel	Equal asso-ciative	Male appropriation	Unequal associative	
						Male career	Female career
Orientation : Perception of men's place in the family	Cooperative companion (shares everything)	Provider, helper at home	Provider, head of family	Equal partner	Leader, main provider and primary parent	Main provider and secondary carer	Main carer/housekeeper, emotional "keeper", supportive partner
Type of inter-actions							
Degree of fusion : prac-tices	Strong family togetherness	Strong family togetherness with gender differentia-tion	Separateness with strong gender differ-entiation	Weaving autonomy and some family togetherness	Weaving male autonomy with some family togetherness	Weaving strong male autonomy, with some family togetherness	Weaving female autonomy with some family togetherness
Degree of fusion : norms	Family fusion	Family fusion	Gender-differentiated autonomy	Individual autonomy	Individual autonomy	Individual autonomy	Individual autonomy
Degree of openness	Average openness	Closure	Closure with some male openness	Strong openness	Strong openness	Strong openness	Strong openness
Conjugal division of paid and unpaid work							
Paid work	Dual earner/ dual career	Dual earner	Dual earner	Dual career	Dual earner, male career	Dual earner, male career/dual career	Female career
Unpaid work	Cooperation and joint manage-ment, rather than strict equality	Mutual support : wife helps bread-winning, man helps at home	Female homemaking	Equal division, strong delegation	Equal division, male leadership	Female homemaking, male occasional help	Male homemaking, female occasional help
Men's family-work balance							
Balance strategy	Family-oriented, cutting back professional investment	Family-oriented, trying to cut back working hours	Provider-oriented, no search for balance	Career-oriented, cutting back family time through delegation	Career +Child-oriented, Balancing career and childcare thr. Flexible work	Career-oriented, low search for balance	Not working, all time for family
Tensions and stress	High stress, difficulty in reconciling work and fusional functioning	Average stress, long working hours imply lack of time for family life	No stress	Career stress, low fam-ily/work stress due to delegation of unpaid work	High stress due to time investment in all spheres	Career stress, low fam-ily/work stress, but strong feeling of guilt	Identity stress. difficulty in coping with male dependence
FATHERHOOD	Joint	Supportive	Disengaged	Equal	Appropriat-ive	Time-condensed	Stay-at-home
Parental practices of fathers							
Caring	Joint caring	Supportive caring	Not involved	Equal caring, strong dele-gation	Male primary caring	Occasional, selective caring	Full-time carer
Other activities	Sharing of many activi-ties	being there /sharing many activi-ties	Occasional play-ing/outings	Sharing of many chosen activities/ interests	Sharing of many activi-ties	Mainly playing	Sharing of many activities
Father-child bond	Closeness, Family-based	Closeness, Family-based and gender-oriented	Distant, Mother is the mediator	Closeness, individual-ized relation-ship	Closeness, father is the mediator	Not so close, Mother tends to be media-tor, some individual-ized playing	Closeness, Family-based and individualized
Orientation : Self-perception as fathers	Nurturer and carer, com-panion, educator, always there	Provider, supportive carer, educa-tor, always there	Provider, head-of-family, show-ing affection	Nurturer and carer, companion, educator, mediator	Primary carer, companion, main educator and provider, mediator	Companion (quality-time father), educator, main provider	Main carer, companion, educator
n=24	4	6	5	2	2	3	2

Table 1 shows the main features of these patterns and the types of family functioning to which we found them to be connected. The first two (joint and supportive fatherhood) emerge within the framework of the two types of fusional functioning described in family sociology as “companionship” and “bastion” families. Disengaged fatherhood is connected to “parallel” families, while the other patterns are linked to various forms of the “associative” family. Contrary to existing typologies, the latter form of family functioning was not found to be as homogeneous as expected. Alongside the “equal associative” couple whose practices closely match the ideals of individual autonomy and gender equality, the interviews revealed different forms of “gender unequal” associative functioning, thereby leading us to break up the initial category into four types. Overall, considering the limited number of interviews, we must regard this patterning as an exploratory, emerging classification of case-types. However, it clearly underlines the need to take into account the growing diversity in what has been designated as the modern “associative” family (Kellerhals *et al.*, 2004). In the analysis of the main patterns of fatherhood which follows we will try to explore some of this diversity.

A. Joint fatherhood (companionship families)

The emphasis here is on the family as a unit, with conjugal cooperation tightly knitted around the needs and interests of the children. From the male perspective, togetherness and collaboration should always be there, but with the arrival of children it is reinforced. As Sérgio, a young computer engineer (33, married to T., 34, marketing director, children aged 10 and 8), puts it :

Families today are not doing a good job in terms of unity. More and more couples have separate accounts, separate lives. I believe the couple has one life.

In this context, principles of individual fulfilment and gender equality are subordinate to the well-being of the family and, in particular, to the interests of the child : «everything revolves around the children. Individual wills come second». As individuals then, these men are committed to their professional life within the constraints imposed by family life. Both members of the dual earner “companionship” couple are expected to adapt their working lives/careers to family needs and to “jointly” share tasks, rather than “divide them equally”. The fusional ideal of “jointness” involves a specific perception of the division of work, less linked to rules of fairness and more centred on availability, mutual support and a feeling of togetherness in day-to-day tasks. These are men who often say «we do it together», a fusional meaning which leads to different practices : doing it in turns, actually doing it together (cleaning, for example) or lending a hand while the other person does it. Extensive delegation of housework and caring is, therefore, not a solution as it detracts from family cohesion. Occasional delegation (of cleaning, of ironing, of caring by grandparents) is preferred.

Fatherhood and motherhood are also seen as closely interdependent, with men considering themselves as partners of a "joint" parental project in which providing for, caring for, doing activities with and educating children are shared and negotiated within the couple and over the life course. These are nurturing fathers who pick up babies in the night, feed and change them and, depending on the demands of professional life at the time, also try to stay at home more to take care of the baby. When children are older, sharing daily routines, developing many activities as a family and actively supporting children's projects/interests become essential elements in building up a close and intimate father-child bond. As fathers, then, these men see themselves not only as highly involved (nurturing, loving, available) but also as active "carers" and "providers", "good friends" and "educators". Family life, conjugality, breadwinning and fatherhood are thus closely connected, both in the identities and in the day-to-day life of fathers.

Men and women in companionship families find it difficult to reconcile strong participation in family life, joint parenthood and low delegation of childcare with the demands of breadwinning. Both try to reduce pressures from work when children are small. Missing work is carefully negotiated within the framework of each parent's job demands and legal rights to leave. Overall, however, levels of stress are very high for all "joint" fathers : those with manual professions have long hours of work and complain of the lack of time to participate in family life ; those with highly qualified professions have to deal with expectations that they will invest strongly in their career and work late. Sérgio, above, is a typical case : as a young computer engineer working in a private firm, his employers expect him to work long hours and stay late. This situation generates high levels of tension at the workplace, with complaints that he is often «nowhere to be found at 4 pm».

B. Supportive fatherhood (bastion families)

Men in this pattern see the family as a closed world, a private refuge in which the family as a group comes first and internal relationships are the main source of identity for both members of the couple. The family is seen as a place which is managed by the woman, sustained by complementary and differentiated gender roles, but no longer centred on the rigid norms of male-breadwinning and female caring. If the woman "helps out financially" by working (and two salaries are considered important to ensure a decent standard of living), then the man must offer to "help out" at home. Armando (37, industrial worker, 3 children, wife employed in a cleaning firm) describes the rationale of the male "helper" as follows :

If I had a different life, more means, I wouldn't mind if my wife stayed at home. But nowadays life isn't easy, and then women like to exercise their role, they don't feel well all alone at home. So we have to help each other, that's all. I don't think there should be rules, I do this you do that ; that's not how I see things, I think that we have to want to help. There must be some help.

Although these men are likely to endorse a more traditional view of gender roles and family life (such as low approval of divorce, or a belief in the naturalness of gender differences) their focus on the internal goals of family life and on conjugal co-operation is reflected in the place they allot fathers in families. Material contributions are essential but emotional ones are also necessary. As a result, men's day-to-day life becomes less centred on separate spheres of male activity and more involved in a closer father-child bond and a denser, emotionally warmer network of family activities. This may range from vacuum-cleaning to taking pleasure in buying the child's favourite yogurts or bringing a frightened child to sleep in the conjugal bed. As fathers, then, these men see themselves attending to their children's emotional and caring needs as well as their material ones. The primary issue, however, is to be "present", meaning that it is important for children to feel that the father is "there", at home. Good fathering is therefore more connected to participation in family life than to the idea of building up individualized activities with children. Fathers and sons may enjoy playing football but fathering also means having the children around while you wash the family car or watch TV. Outings are quite rare, mainly linked to visiting close relatives or going down to the café together, and some fathers in this pattern, who openly mistrust the external world, like to encourage their children to stay at home as much as possible.

Although they are less active in daily tasks than "joint" fathers, these working class men experience some work/family stress due to long working hours and supplemental breadwinning that make it difficult to be "present". This is especially true of men who have atypical working hours. Helder, (40, quality control operator, married to G., 31, waitress, children aged 6 and 4), works 11 hours a day and 3 different shifts :

Just a little bit more time, just a little [...] one likes to be with the family, to be with the little ones, because I have a family now. But with this timetable, I often want to spend more time with the family and I can't.

C. Disengaged fatherhood (parallel families)

Rather than a fusional model of conjugal functioning based on the "presence" and "help" of male partners in family life, men in this pattern focus on the principles of the male breadwinner model and of gender-differentiated autonomy. Having a family and children is essential to male identity but it is linked here to the idea of the husband as main provider and "head" of the family. Emphasis on gender differentiation and on the ideology of separate spheres is strong : the woman does all the housework and caring (supported by other women if necessary), the man has separate timetables, interests and hobbies.

Marcelo, 38, an optician with a 12-hour workday, married to F., 38, a saleswoman in a clothing shop (6 hour workdays, including Saturdays), children aged 8 and 3, is an example of disengaged fatherhood. He grew

up in a traditional family with father as breadwinner (distant and authoritarian) and mother as a homemaker who never allowed her two sons to do anything at home. M. confesses that :

somehow unconsciously, I assume that posture that all men assume, I mean 'I'm the head of the family', and in fact in our case that's how it is, I mean, my salary is much more important.

In daily life, he invests first and foremost in his professional life and then in his favourite hobby (deputy director of a sports' club). As a father he sees himself as a good provider, affectionate and showing interest in his children's activities and progress (something his father never did) as well as someone who is "present when needed". During the week he arrives home too late to be with his children (grandmother and mother take care of them and M. has never felt any pressure to get more involved) ; during the weekend he spends a lot of time at the club, sometimes taking his children along while his wife does housework.

In a setting of conjugal separateness and differentiation, disengaged fathers are more absent in the day-to-day life of their children than supportive fathers. They do not participate in caring for babies and young children or take up paternity leave. In fact, they consider that men «who ask for 5 or 10 days leave are running away from their professional responsibilities». As fathers, they emphasize their role as authority figures and providers who are expected to be "at work", not "at home", but they do not want to be like the distant, authoritarian fathers of the past. However, rather than "being there" or spending more time with the children, they feel that what matters most is to have a father-child relationship based on some affection, understanding and interest. Although the mother continues to be an important mediator of parental relationships, the father is no longer the overbearing father figure inspiring fear and demanding immediate obedience.

Reconciling work and family life is not an issue for these fathers. Within the "parallel" interactions of family life, they feel free to establish their own work/life balance. Seeing children at meal-times and during part of the weekend is considered to be "sufficient" to engage in a pattern of fatherhood centred on breadwinning, education and affectionate understanding.

D. Equal fatherhood (equal associative families)

A primary issue in this pattern is gender equality and individual autonomy both in professional and family life. These are highly qualified men who see themselves and their partner as strongly and equally committed to professional life, within a relationship based on principles of equality, autonomy and careful management of family time and individual time. As one husband says :

in our case, it's a relationship between equals [...] the opinions of both have to be taken into account [...] in fact, if one day J. was ada-

mant about some matter and I was also adamant, we would probably have to do both things, each one would do his/her thing.

In accordance with these principles of "associative" partnership, both members invest strongly in their individual careers, have separate as well as common interests, and believe that all tasks and responsibilities are "divided" in a "fair" way :

I think that the division of tasks at home should reflect the division of work outside the home [...] in cases like mine, where the effort of work outside the home is divided half and half, the work effort inside the house should be divided, for reasons of justice, in the same manner.

The idea is that men can (have the skills to) and should participate "equally" in all caring and household tasks. However, putting this into practice is facilitated by the fact that these dual-career couples delegate a large amount of housework as well as caring tasks. During the week paid and unpaid services care for children until late in the evening and do most of the housework ; during the weekends, the couple divide the cooking, the shopping, and caring for young children. These men feel that before the arrival of children they did not really have a sense of family responsibility. The transition to parenthood was instrumental in creating interdependence and more pooling of resources, time and interests. Perhaps for this reason, parenthood is regarded as a crucial sphere of male investment in family life, more important almost than partnership, and leading to an acute awareness of the special bonds that must be fostered between men and their children.

Patrício, an economist, is a good example of equal fatherhood. The only child of two economists, both former higher civil servants, P. now has his own private firm while his wife, trained in management and marketing, is director of a multinational firm. When their daughter was born (3 years after marriage, when P. and J. were 30), both had long working hours, sometimes having to travel for work reasons and trying hard to move up the career ladder. To be able to reconcile work and care, the couple relied on a domestic employee and especially on grandparents. During the week, for several years, P.'s parents (retired) would move in to take care of the baby during the day and to be there in the evening after she came back from pre-school ; if P. or J. had to be away for several days, there was no need to change the child's routine as the grandparents were always there. During the weekend the couple was left to itself : childcare and housework were divided "equally" (P. cooks and does the garden ; J. washes up and tidies). Paternal leave did not yet exist at the time, but P. was a nurturing father, changing nappies, giving baths, making and giving the baby its first carrot soup. Altogether, P. feels he is very different from some of his friends whose wives do not work or have not invested in a career. He considers himself as "equalitarian" and respectful of his wife's autonomy and commitment to professional life.

Men in this pattern feel that the division of childcare tasks is important for creating close emotional and physical bonds with the child, but they also emphasize the need for each parent to develop his own, individualized relationship with the child. For this, fathers must build up common interests, tastes or leisure activities which both enjoy, and they must be available to give support in matters pertaining to male or personal skills (helping with school work, for example). As fathers, then, they see themselves as nurturing and caring, as good friends and modern educators («who play and educate at the same time»). They also regard themselves as “mediators” between the child and society, as parental gatekeepers who guide and give children tools to gain independence and deal with the outside world.

Extensive delegation of household and caring tasks in this pattern of fatherhood means that the work/family balance is not experienced as very stressful. Nevertheless, strong delegation of care and strong commitment to professional life does not always leave much time for equal parenting for either of the partners. This career/fathering tension is worked upon and “solved” in various ways : by trying to keep close to the child emotionally and physically (by communicating regularly, by phone if necessary ; by dividing all the care when at home) ; by being available on a 24-hour basis ; by creating special spheres (interests, hobbies, etc.) of father-child interaction. Male identity in family life is thus strongly focused on fathering. Even if the couple relationship is also highlighted as important, it is sometimes slightly out of the picture. In fact, individual self-fulfilment through a rewarding professional career coupled with “equal” fatherhood often leaves little availability for partnership. This is sometimes regretted, but it is not expressed as a major work/life problem at this stage in family life. For both partners, their commitment to a rewarding career while caring for a young child is more important.

E. Appropriative fatherhood

(unequal associative families centred on male appropriation)

In this type of conjugal functioning men see themselves as the main actors of family life, emphasizing the need to be managers and organizers of the family (thereby implying a certain devaluation of their partner, who is considered to have lower parental skills and also as having to be guided). Contrary to the former pattern, where partners negotiate housework and parenthood in the context of dual careers, men in this type of family functioning feel that they have to take over on their own (in a certain sense, therefore, they appropriate family life to themselves). As one interviewee remarks : «I have imposed more [...] there is greater ascendancy on my side». Nevertheless, the normative context is a modern one : these men believe that men in families have to divide household and caring tasks equally, that women should be autonomous and work outside the home, that the attributes of motherhood and fatherhood are very much the same. As children, they often had to fend for themselves, learning to

cook fairly early on in life. Thus the division of housework and caring is not traditionally gendered, but always takes into account the timetables and priorities set out by the male partner. In practice, this means that these men shoulder the main breadwinner role as well as responsibility for some of the time-consuming household or caring tasks, such as cooking, putting children to bed or being there for them when they get home from school.

As fathers, they feel that active participation in day-to-day nurturing and caring is crucial but they also underline the importance of being "good friends", "modern educators" and "protective mediators" for their children. However, contrary to fathers in equal associative families, they tend to see themselves as primary caregivers and educators rather than part of a shared parental project; from this point of view, they compete for, rather than divide, parental involvement. Men's place in family life is therefore overlaid with multiple roles. These men consider themselves as main providers, as managers of partnership and parenthood, as main caregivers and educators of their children. If we add individual self-fulfilment through a demanding career, then we can understand why these men experience very high levels of work/family stress. It is extremely difficult to find time for everything and the only way to reconcile a career/a managerial position, primary caregiving, housework and overall management of family life is to rely on flexible working hours. Extra hours of professional work are systematically built into the evenings, after the child has been fetched from school and helped with school work, and the family has had its evening meal. Short periods of more intense professional work are squeezed into daily routines organized around childcare and family activities. In spite of the high levels of work/family stress, these men convey a sense of pride. They are proud of being "modern" men who take on any role or task considered as female. They are proud, in particular, of being fathers who control and are actively involved in the day-to-day lives and education of their children.

Pedro is an example of appropriative fatherhood. As a husband, he feels that he "oversees" family life and is conscious that he has more power both within the couple relationship and in relation to his daughter. He prefers to put his «ascendancy», as he calls it, down to his active participation in day-to-day life rather than mention his position as main provider or his qualifications (P., aged 41, PhD, is a researcher and M., aged 38, secondary level of education, works full-time in the administrative sector of a town council): «at home I do most of the work [...] if one thinks of a couple dividing tasks, I am the wife rather than the husband». P. does all the cooking (he does not think his wife cooks well), most of the shopping and also helps with the cleaning; he is the first to get up in the morning to wake his four-year-old daughter, make breakfast and put her on the school bus, and is usually there to greet her in the afternoon. Strongly involved in fatherhood, he tries to be there for her as much as possible, even if this implies finishing work earlier and then working at

home after dinner. As for education, he thinks he does this better than M. and must therefore be prepared to make an extra effort. P. finds it difficult to reconcile work, household tasks and childcare. He feels he is always rushed and thinks that "what suffers most" is his research work. To compensate, he takes advantage of his flexible working hours to work at home and also invests more strongly in his work when research obliges him to spend a few weeks in another country. In spite of P.'s discourse on the importance of autonomy, M. is quite dependent on him and, in practice, is very much a supportive partner propping up P.'s autonomy. On the other hand, partnership for P. represents a protective scenario where he can become a father, his main role in family life.

F. Time-condensed fatherhood

(unequal associative families centred on the male career)

This pattern of fatherhood resembles a deviated version of the equal fatherhood pattern. At the outset, both partners were investing in professional life and building up a career. Equality, individual autonomy and openness to the outside world were ideal principles of conjugal functioning. Over the years and with the arrival of children, however, family life changed considerably. At present, male investment in a career is linked to strong female involvement in caring and housework, even if mothers are holding down a full-time job and consider it important, in terms of personal autonomy, to continue to do so. Both partners work full-time and both value professional life. However, for different reasons, usually associated with life course events (such as female unemployment, or two or three births very close together), the man builds up his career and his independence more successfully, and parity within the couple disappears. Men in this pattern see themselves as successful career-oriented partners, less actively involved in parenthood than their wives, and with little time for family life in general. In this setting, they regard women's higher involvement with homemaking as part of the gender order and feel that women, especially when there are children, become more important in the home than men. They also feel that their partner agreed to support them in their strategy of investing in professional life and keeping the individual freedom that goes along with this. As one interviewee remarks, «In relation to family life, my wife has always been there».

Francisco, two children aged 5 and 6, is a good example of this pattern. F. is an architect with his own studio, as well as a university professor. He works long hours and nearly always works well into the night. At the beginning of their marriage I., who is slightly older, had finished university and was financial director in a private firm. To "help" him, so that F. could finish his studies more quickly, she became the main breadwinner and took over all the housework; the fact that F. did not know how to cook favoured this solution. F. comments that he became the person who cleans, tidies up and "decorates" the house (however, in ideal terms, he believes that couples should divide household tasks equally and is con-

scious that he has never done as much as he should). Some years later, when their first child was 6 months old, and already in day care, I. unexpectedly became unemployed (her firm was transferred) and then, while still looking for a new job, accidentally became pregnant. From no wish of her own, she thus ended up staying at home for nearly three years (an experience which F. describes as rather "hard" on her) and, on returning to the labour market, was obliged to accept a secretarial job with a much lower status and income than in her previous jobs. In the meantime F. became the main breadwinner of the family, a position which, in his eyes, now accounts for his lack of participation in family life. Given his various activities, F. points out that he «cannot put limits on his freedom in professional life». He also feels that it is impossible to reconcile work and fatherhood : «I just can't reconcile things, especially if there is work to hand in». Instead, he tries to have quality time with the children :

I don't spend much time with them, but when I do, I really do, I try to make as much of it as I can, and weekends I always make a point of playing with them.

Fathers in this pattern are only occasionally involved in the day-to-day practices of parenting. Some, such as F. above, hardly participate in childcare after the birth of their children. Others make an effort to introduce some "time-condensed" fathering into daily baby care by selecting a specific task (putting them to bed, getting up in the night). As children grow up, the concept of "quality time" is transferred to one main activity : playing with them during the weekend. Thus fatherhood is very much centred on "loving" and "playing". Time-condensed, elective fathers also see themselves as modern "educators" who should guide and teach through negotiation. However, they sometimes have difficulties in achieving this and admit that, as compared to their partner, there is more "distance" between themselves and their children. As a result, rather than stress linked to the problem of a work/family balance, there is often a feeling of guilt : guilt in relation to partners and children (for not being there enough), guilt for failing to live up to the ideals of equal partnership and parenthood.

G. Stay-at-home fatherhood

(unequal associative families centred on the female career)

This pattern of men's place in the family is also related to conjugal norms of autonomy, negotiation and gender equality, but it is roughly the reverse of the previous "male career" pattern. Here, it is the woman who takes on the leading role in professional achievement and breadwinning, while the man takes on the caring tasks and household responsibilities. By becoming a stay-at-home father, he challenges the traditional conjugal division of labour, an option which is seen to be rooted in modern beliefs concerning the importance of equality and the right to self-fulfilment for both partners. Nevertheless, the reasons presented for male caring are also financial, related to the need to provide for the family : since the wife

earns more (or has a career), the husband is the one chosen to stay at home during the child's first years of life. It is also the man's inability to achieve a successful and stable job, even though he may be professionally qualified, which justifies male staying-at-home. This is obviously a minority pattern but it is linked to the undermining, both in normative terms and at the level of employment regimes, of the male provider role. Professional life today is frequently subject to instability, unemployment or under-employment. Couples who find themselves in these situations have to face new challenges related to the "reinvention" of the male role in the family. Men taking on full-time domestic and childcare tasks have to rethink their identity in order to lend a positive meaning to male domestic dependence. This is what happened to Filipe, an unemployed artist with a major in Arts, the "stay-at-home father" of a three year old toddler.

F., 47, lived with his wife, a university professor with a successful career, for more than 20 years before the birth of their child. Over the years F. had a very unstable professional career, and this contributed to the couple's decision that F. would stop working. In spite of cherishing his autonomy, F. perceives the present situation as natural : in his view, it is the parent with lower financial resources who should stay at home. Since they decided not to put the baby in day care before the age of three, his wife went back to work three months after childbirth, while he assumed the role of a full-time daddy. During the past three years, F. has had to deal with significant changes in his routines, priorities and identity. Financial dependence on his wife, the absence of a professional activity and the position of a stay-at-home father has led him, as he says, «to invent a new self». From the point of view of routines F. has had to adapt to his wife's professional rhythms, becoming a "back-up" not only for her career but also of the mother-child relationship. Although he is the main carer, the mother remains a central figure, a situation which often leads to some ambiguity in F.'s self-definition as a stay-at-home dad. On the one hand, he emphasizes his primary role in the family by pointing to his indispensability and his underlying power as manager of the home. He compares himself to traditional women who, behind a façade of male authority, were the ones who ruled the home. On the other hand, he believes in women's natural skills and intuition as mothers, and this creates some uncertainty in his definition of himself as main caregiver. For example, in the case of divorce, F. views the mother as the parent most capable of taking care of the children. Routines are organised according to the mother's availability to be with the child (mainly evenings). «Mother's time must be protected», F. says, so he puts himself aside and does domestic chores. They have a domestic who comes three mornings a week, but F. does most of the housework. Above all, he portrays himself as a figure of "sacrifice" and "protection", someone who gave up a lot not only to care for a child and the home but also to preserve and protect the mother-child bond. He describes his experience as rewarding and self-fulfilling, but

finds it difficult to cope with the demands of being a man within a female domain. At present, he is trying to get back to painting.

In summary, stay-at-home fathers experience serious doubts about their capabilities as family men. Rather than simply considering staying at home to care for a baby as an "opportunity" to be a caring parent (a meaning given by men to female staying-at-home), they also experience a sense of "uncertainty" with the gender order and with conventional norms of masculinity (Doucet, 2004). As stay-at-home fathers, they feel they have built up an emotionally close relationship with the child and they also regard themselves as the main carer. However, given the importance attached to the mother's place in family life, these fathers also see themselves as emotional keepers or "protectors" of family bonds, in particular of the mother-child bond.

III. Conclusion

In this article we have explored the diversity of fatherhood patterns in families today. We have focused on men as fathers, breadwinners and partners, thereby emphasizing the analytical linkages between fatherhood and family functioning in order to capture the plurality of fatherhood dynamics. Our evidence can only be tentative, as our qualitative research is based on twenty-four in-depth interviews and therefore cannot provide a comprehensive overview of men in families. However, our findings do suggest that the social norms and practices of fatherhood must be placed in the context of family dynamics. Common assumptions as to the greater involvement of fathers, particularly in respect of active participation in day-to-day family living, are interpreted and put into practice differently when combined with and constrained by family interactions and events, gendered divisions of work, work/family pressures and differential investment, by men and women, in the public and private spheres of life.

Results suggest that the meanings and forms of fatherhood are firmly embedded in the complex dynamics of family life. Emphasis on family fusion, gender equality and openness ("companionship" families) encourages a joint fatherhood pattern in which both partners put family and children first and jointly "share" all breadwinning, caring and household tasks. Family-orientated togetherness is associated with fathers' active participation in the day-to-day practices of caring and housework. However, when familism and fusional interactions are linked to greater gender differentiation and closure ("bastion" families), the social processes of fathering become connected to supportive fatherhood, a pattern where men are supplemental caregivers and homemakers and also provide togetherness by spending time at home. This contrasts sharply with male breadwinner men who underline the idea of separate worlds for partners ("parallel" families), thereby seeing themselves as disengaged fathers who provide for and monitor their children at a distance rather than being actively involved in day-to-day practices of caring or housework.

Fatherhood seems to take on other meanings and forms in the setting of “associative” families emphasizing gender equality, individual autonomy and openness. However, rather than one main type of fatherhood, interviews revealed diverse patterns of conjugal and parental dynamics which this article has tried to explore. A pattern of equal fatherhood was identified in settings where dual commitment to a career is combined with a dual carer model relying on strong delegation of caring and housework. On the other hand, couples with more asymmetrical forms of investment in professional life and in parenthood seem to be linked to three possible patterns of fatherhood : appropriative fathers are those who become the primary caregivers and educators of children ; time-condensed (or “elective”) fathers are career-oriented men (in couples where the wife has taken on a stronger commitment to parenthood) who search for quality time with their children ; stay-at-home fathers are men who, by choice but also constrained by job or career instability, hand over breadwinning to their partner and provisionally become the main caregivers of their children.

Results also show that the analytical approach used in this study was instrumental in two important ways. On the one hand, family dynamics helped us to understand the diversity and the multiple dimensions of fathering. For example, it was only through an approach focusing on differential family interactions that we were able to build up a picture of the individualized father-child bond. On the other hand, fatherhood helped us to further the understanding of family functioning, in particular of the “associative” family, which emerges as varied and complex in our typology.

To summarize this discussion it is also important to mention the relationship between the patterning of fatherhood and tensions related to work/life conflict and to the negotiation of masculinity. By convention, men are still expected to carry out the larger part of breadwinning, although the extent of gender differentials varies considerably between families. We found that work/family stress was particularly high in patterns where men were main breadwinners, career-oriented and actively involved in a large amount of day-to-day caring and household tasks (“companionship” and male “appropriation” families) ; however, these were also the men who felt they were living up to new expectations, thus revealing fewer problems in negotiating old and new masculinities. In contrast, those investing strongly in their careers (to the detriment of involvement in family life) and stay-at-home fathers were having greater difficulty in this area, the former due to feelings of guilt for “not being there”, the latter due to the absence of professional fulfilment and the lack of male domestic role-models. In summary, all fathers in families with young children were found to be juggling old and new practices, old and new masculinities. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in this article suggests that the consequences of these trends for male identity and

work/life stress are strongly shaped by the variable contexts related to conjugal functioning and gendered divisions of labour.

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